

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 00721 210734Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 CU-02 DHA-02 BIB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00
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P 181550Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2303
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
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AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION NATO
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USUN NEW YORK 539
USMISSION BERLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 00721 210734Z

SUBJECT: CHARTER 77; MOURNING AND UNCERTAINTY

REF: PRAGUE 0681

1. SUMMARY: THE FUNERAL OF JAN PATOCKA WAS THE MAIN EVENT
AFFECTING CHARTER 77 THIS WEEK. THE AUTHORITIES ARE CONTINUING TO
PUT HEAVY PRESSURE ON ITS ADHERENTS, WHO HAVE NOT YET DEVELOPED

A CLEAR STRATEGY FOR THE COMING DAYS. JIRI HAJEK, THOUGH STILL UNDER SEMI-HOUSE ARREST, AND OTHER FORMER OFFICIALS ARE TRYING TO KEEP MOMENTUM BY ADDRESSING ANOTHER APPEAL TO WESTERN COMMUNIST PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

2. FUNERAL OF JAN PATOCKA: THE SENSE OF CONFUSION AND LOSS FELT BY PATOCKA'S ASSOCIATES FOLLOWING HIS DEATH (REF PRAGUE 0681) DID NOT PREVENT UPWARDS OF 800 PEOPLE FROM ATTENDING HIS FUNERAL AT 10/00 A.M. MARCH 16. MORE MIGHT HAVE BEEN AT THE CEMETERY, BUT POLICE CLOSED OFF ACCESS SHORTLY BEFORE THE BURIAL SERVICE BEGAN. THE MOTIVE FOR THE CLOSURE APPEARED IN PART A LEGITIMATE CROWD CONTROL MEASURE, BUT IDENTITIES OF PEOPLE TRYING TO ENTER THE AREA BY CAR WERE BEING CHECKED. AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY FORCED REVISION OF THE PLAN TO HOLD A SEPARATE MEMORIAL SERVICE MARCH 18 AND IT WAS HELD INSTEAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BURIAL. SECRET POLICE AGENTS WITH STILL AND VIDEO CAMERAS WERE NUMEROUS, PHOTOGRAPHING ALL WHO PASSED THE GRAVE IN FINAL TRIBUTE, AND A POLICE HELICOPTER HOVERED OVERHEAD. FOUR EMBASSIES, INCLUDING THIS EMBASSY, WERE REPRESENTED; NETHERLANDS BY DCM, FRG BY CULTURAL OFFICER, US BY CHIEF OF CONSULAR SECTION AND SWEDISH BY STAFF MEMBER; AT LEAST ONE DIPLOMAT, AN ITALIAN, WAS PREVENTED BY THE ROAD BLOCK FROM ATTENDING. SOME OF THE BEST KNOWN CHARTER ADHERENTS WERE ALSO UNABLE TO ATTEND, HAVING BEEN DIRECTED TO REPORT INSTEAD FOR QUESTIONING.

3. REGIME HANDLING OF DEATH: THE ONLY MEDIA REACTION SO FAR TO PATOCKA'S DEATH WAS A MARCH 17 RUDE PRAVO COMMENTARY WHICH ACCUSED WEST OF TRYING TO CAPITALIZE ON THE DEATH IN ITS ANTI-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PRAGUE 00721 210734Z

CZECHOSLOVAK CAMPAIGN. THE COMMENTARY POINTS OUT THAT PATOCKA HAD HEALTH PROBLEMS BEFORE THE CHARTER ISSUE AROSE, ACCUSES HIS FRIENDS OF SENDING A MAN WITH HEART TROUBLE "TO REVERSE THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT OF THE NETHERLANDS FOREIGN MINISTER TO PRAGUE," AND CITES THE LENGTH OF HIS MARCH 8 LETTER WRITTEN IN HOSPITAL (SEE BELOW) AS PROOF HE DIED A NATURAL DEATH. COMMENT: THE MARKED DEFENSIVENESS OF THE COMMENTARY MAY RAISE QUESTIONS HERE ABOUT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH THAT HAVENOT PREVIOUSLY COME UP. (CHARTER SOURCES, IN FACT, INSIST PATOCKA RECEIVED EXCELLENT HOSPITAL CARE AND WAS NOT INTERROGATED IN THE HOSPITAL). END COMMENT: IN THE SAME PAPER, A FRONT PAGE EDITORIAL SLAMS U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS EFFORTS AND, IN PARTICULAR, CHARTER 77.

4. NEW DOCUMENTS: THREE NEW DOCUMENTS, ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN REPORTED BY WESTERN MEDIA--CHARTER DOCUMENT NO. 7, WHICH DEBUNKS REGIME CLAIMS OF ITS ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON WOMEN'S AND WORKERS'

RIGHTS AND FULL EMPLOYMENT; CHARTER DOCUMENT 8, A CONSOLIDATED LIST OF SIGNERS OF THE CHARTER PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED AND OVER 100 ADDITIONAL NAMES; AND PATOCKA'S LETTER OF MARCH 8. THE LAST IS A DOCUMENT OF GREAT DIGNITY DESCRIBING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE CHARTER AND APPEALING TO ITS SUPPORTERS TO REMAIN STEADFAST, TO REFUSE TO BE INTIMIDATED AND TO SPEAK ONLY THE TRUTH--"BEHAVIOR WHICH IS IMPRESSIVE BECAUSE IT IS IN SUCH CONTRAST TO THE WAY THE AUTHORITIES ACT."

5. INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS: TWO RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING AMONG DIPLOMATS AND CORRESPONDENTS HERE: A) DURING FEBRUARY VISIT HERE SOVIET PARTY SECRETARY KAPITONOV LACED INTO CPCZ SECRETARY VASIL BILAK FOR SLUMSINESS IN DEALING WITH CHARTER. HE SAID LATTER, WHO OVERSEES INTERNAL ECURITY, SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ABOUT CHARTER MOVEMENT AND NUMBER OF ITS SUPPORTERS WELL BEFORE IT SURFACED AND SUPPRESSED IT THEN. HAVING FAILED THAT, HE SHOULD HAVE AVOIDED THE OVERREACTION THAT BEGAN AFTER WORLD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 PRAGUE 00721 210734Z

FIRST LEARNED OF CHARTER. COMMENT: LOCAL PRESS DID NOT REPORT ANY KAPITONOV-BILAK MEETING BUT DID NOT KAPITONOV CALL ON HUSAK. END SOMMENT. B) AT PARTY SECRETARIES MEETING IN SOFIA MARCH 2-3, BILAK WAS WHIPPINT BOY. POLES ALLEGEDLY CRITICIZED HIM FOR CAUSING THEM PROBLEMS BY LETTING THE CHARTER ISSUE GET OVERBLOWN, HUNGARIANS FOLLOWED SUIT MORE QUIETLY, AND SOVIETS DID NOT COME TO BILAK'S SUPPORT. COMMENT: BOTH ABOVE RUMORS COULD BE TRUE. THE SECOND, ESPECIALLY, SEEMS REASONABLE, BUT THEY ALSO MAY HAVE BEEN MANUFACTURED BY BILAK'S RIVALS. END COMMENT.

6. LEGALITY OF CHARTER 77; RUDE PRAVO DEPUTY EDITOR HORINE TOLD AMBASSADOR MARCH 16(SEPTEL) THAT DISSEMINATIO OF CHARTER DOCUMENTS WAS ILLEGAL BECAUSE THEY WERE OBVIOUSLY PRODUCED BY AN ORGANIZATION--NOT JUST INDIVIDUALS--WHICH IS NOT REGISTERED UNDER CSSR LAWS.

7. APPEAL TO WESTERN CPS: AS THIS WAS BEING WRITTEN, THE NEWS REACHED US OF AN APPEAL BY JIRI HAJEK AND 10 OTHER FORMER OFFICIALS UNDER DUBCEK FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF WESTERN COMMUNIST PARTIES IN STOPPING THE REGIME'S INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN. WE HAVE NOT YET OBTAINED THE TEST, BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THIS APPEAL WILL BE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN EARLIER APPEALS TO WESTERN CPS, WHICH HAVE THEIR OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND LIMITED INFLUENCE ON EVENTS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

8. COMMENT: THE REGIME IS OBVIOUSLY KEEPING HEAVY PRESSURE ON THE DISSIDENTS IN SPITE OF ITS RELATIVE RESTRAINT IN HANDLING PATOCKA'S FUNERAL. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY WHAT THE FUTURE PATTERN OF THE MOVEMENT WILL BE OR WHETHER IT MAY GO DORMANT FOR A WHILE AS SOME ADHERENTS ARE SAID TO BE ADVOCATING. WE HAVE THE

IMPRESSION THAT PATOCKA'S DEATH MAY HAVE STRENGTHENED THE RESOLVE
OF THE CHARTER 77 GROUP TO CARRY FORWARD ITS STRUGGLE FOR
INCREASED RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.
BYRNE

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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